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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 22 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to inform you of the Palestinian terrorist attack on the Kerem Shalom crossing, as well as violence carried out by Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip in recent days.

On 19 April, three disguised military vehicles laden with explosives approached the Kerem Shalom crossing under heavy morning fog. Kerem Shalom handles approximately 200 humanitarian aid trucks each week, and is the central access point for food and supplies into Gaza. Palestinian terrorists detonated two of the vehicles, wounding 13 Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers; one moderately seriously, two moderately and eight lightly. Four terrorists were killed, and IDF foiled an attempt to detonate the third vehicle. The bombing attack was combined with a barrage of 15 mortar shells fired at the area. Later in the day, IDF thwarted a fourth booby-trapped vehicle from reaching the security fence near Kibbutz Nirim. The terrorists planned a wider attack, including possibly kidnapping IDF soldiers.

A day earlier, on 18 April, at least 16 Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip. One hit high-tension power lines in Sderot, causing an electricity blackout, and another landed in the yard of a house in Sderot. Another rocket exploded near a school.

The attack on Kerem Shalom is a grave assault on the sovereignty of the State of Israel, and constitutes the fifth such attack in 10 days upon a central lifeline crossing; the Nahal Oz fuel terminal was attacked by Palestinian terrorists on 9 April. Hamas, which bears responsibility for these attacks, seeks to escalate the situation by attacking the very arteries designed to bring aid and relief to Palestinian civilians. Moreover, as the crossing points are evidence of the cooperation between Israel and the moderate Palestinian leadership, Hamas desperately forces their closure. But in attacking the crossing points, Hamas deprives the Palestinian civilians of humanitarian aid, and hence bears responsibility for any humanitarian

situation. In contrast, Israel will continue to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip even while it is attacked from that territory.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 17 and 18, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative